



Holiday Safety Tips



Holiday Safety Tips for Avoiding Fires and Injuries

As the holidays approach, the Safety Office is encouraging people to look for and eliminate potential danger spots from holiday lights and decorations that could lead to fires or injuries. Decorating our homes for the holidays is a beautiful tradition. Each year, hospital emergency rooms treat 8,100 people for injuries, such as falls, cuts, and shocks related to holiday lights, decorations, and Christmas trees. In addition, Christmas trees are involved in more than 400 fires annually, resulting in 30 deaths, 90 injuries, and an average of more than \$17 million in property loss and damage. Everyone can ensure that this holiday is a safe and happy one by following a few simple safety tips.



Christmas Trees

- ? Look for the label "Fire Resistant" when purchasing an artificial tree. This indicates the tree will resist burning and should extinguish quickly.
- ? If using an artificial tree, clean it before use and storage. Dust increases flammability.
- ? Check for freshness when purchasing a live tree—fresh trees are green, needles are hard to pull from branches, needles do not break when bent, base of tree is sticky with resin or sap, and tree doesn't lose too many needles when tapped on the ground.
- ? Keep the tree outside with the trunk immersed in snow or water until you are ready to decorate it.
- ? Once inside, cut a small 1-2" diagonal slice off the bottom of the trunk—keep the stand filled with water.
- ? Use a stable, reliable tree stand that won't tip over.
- ? Place the tree away from fireplaces and radiators, out of the way of traffic, and do not block doorways.
- ? After the holidays, take down the tree as soon as possible.
- ? Dispose of the tree by recycling or discarding by local regulations. NEVER burn the tree.

Lights

- ? Use only lights that were tested for safety by a recognized testing laboratory—indicates conformance with safety standards.
- ? Use proper lights for proper areas—indoor lights are not for outdoors.
- ? Check all lights, new and old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, loose connections, burned areas, and bulb or plug defects. Replace defective bulbs. Throw out damaged sets.
- ? After checking the strands, plug them in and leave on for 10-15 minutes to check for shorts, defects, and melting or smoking bulbs.
- ? Don't overload extension cords—no more than three strands should be connected to one extension cord.
- ? Never use electric lights on a metallic tree.
- ? Keep the strand clear of the tree water.
- ? Keep the cords out of high traffic areas and never run a cord under a rug. Avoid running the plug behind furniture.
- ? Fasten outdoor lights securely, using insulated tape or light holders.
- Turn off all lights when leaving the house or going to bed.

Decorations

- ? Use only non-combustible or flame resistant materials to trim a tree. Choose tinsel or artificial icicles made of plastic or nonleaded metals.
- ? Keep glass and electrical ornaments at least four feet off the ground.
- Keep tinsel high up—away from children and pets.
- ? Discard any old ornaments that are chipped or cracked. Dispose of any ornaments that may be painted with a lead-based paint or other toxic materials.
- ? Avoid metallic ornaments due to shock hazards.
- ? In homes with small children, take special care to avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable, keep trimmings with small removable parts out of reach, and avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food.
- ? Ensure that children can't and don't climb after objects.
- ? Wear gloves to protect hands from irritation when working with spun glass or angel hair.

IMPORTANT: When placing decorations, setting up Christmas trees and lights, please use a safe ladder or stand to prevent fall hazards.

Holiday Toy Safety

The following tips will help you choose appropriate toys this holiday season and all year round:

- ? Select toys to suit the age abilities, skills, and interest level of the intended child. Toys too advanced may pose safety hazards to younger children.
- ? For infants, toddlers, and all children who still mouth objects, avoid toys with small parts which could pose a fatal choking hazard.

- ? For all children under age 8, avoid toys that have sharp edges and points.
- ? Don't purchase electric toys with heating elements for children under age 8.
- ? Be a label reader. Look for labels that give age recommendations and use that information as a guide.
- ? Check instructions for clarity. They should be clear to you, and when appropriate, to the child.

- ? Immediately discard plastic wrappings on toys, which can cause suffocations, before they become deadly playthings.

By using common sense and these safety suggestions, holiday shoppers can make informed decisions when purchasing toys for children.





Drinking and Driving



Part of the fun during the holiday season is getting together with family, friends and coworkers. These parties can build closer relationships and better office unity. There is, however, one major safety concern—the consumption of alcohol. Every year alcohol-related deaths and accidents rise during the holidays. At all functions, designated drivers need to be available to drive others home. Plenty of non-alcoholic beverages need to be provided for the designated drivers and for people who choose not to drink. If you choose to drink, here are several rules to remember regarding the consumption of alcohol.



Remember the one-to-one. For every one alcoholic drink consumed, allow one hour for the alcohol to leave your system.



Don't consume alcohol on an empty stomach; eat snacks throughout the party.



Don't drink to excess.



Don't drink if you're pregnant or nursing a baby.



Don't drink if you're taking medication.



Don't drink and drive.

Arrive Home ALIVE!!

Holiday Food Preparation

Although safe food preparation is important year-round, it becomes even more essential during the holiday season. This is because station personnel are busy cooking and baking for the holidays and friends are coming to dinner. The disaster of food poisoning can be avoided by following some simple food safety guidelines.

- Keep all cookware, utensils, preparation areas, and hands clean.
- Refrigerate foods that require cold storage.
- If food needs to be chilled during serving, place the dish on a bed of ice.
- Keep foods that need to stay warm on a hot plate or in an oven at temperature no lower than 110°F.
- Refrigerate leftovers immediately.
- Defrost meats in the refrigerator or the microwave. Never allow them to thaw at room temperature. Meats that are wrapped can be soaked in cold water to speed up the thawing process (30 minutes per pound).
- Turkey and other poultry should be stuffed just before cooking.
- Use a meat thermometer to check for doneness. Turkey is done when inner thigh temperature reaches 180°F and the stuffing is 165°F.

General Rules for Holiday Safety

? Keep matches, lighters, and candles out of childrens reach.

particularly long, open sleeves—near open flames—such as those of a fireplace, stove, or candlelit table.

? Avoid smoking near flammable decorations.

? Make an emergency plan to use if a fire breaks out anywhere in the home. See that each family member knows what to do.
PRACTICE THE PLAN!

? Never burn candles near evergreens. Burning evergreens in the fireplace can also be hazardous.

? Plan for safety. Remember, there is no substitute for common sense.

? Avoid wearing loose flowing clothes —

Coping with Holiday Stress



The holiday season is now in full swing. We are now in the hustle bustle time of preparation for the exciting holidays coming up. Everyone suddenly seems to be busy; trees are being decorated, lights are being hung, cookies are being baked, presents are being bought and wrapped, and parties are being planned. While these activities are meant to provide joy in our lives, they can often lead to holiday stress. It is important to know how to recognize negative stress, as well as how to avoid or minimize it. Some symptoms of negative stress are: *insomnia, anger, verbal or physical abuse, depression, overuse of drugs and alcohol, fatigue, illness, and uncontrolled spending or eating.* These symptoms are warning signs that say "reassess things—now". Here are some stress habits and ways to deal with them:

? **Unrealistic Expectations/Schedule Overload/Demands of Others**— Hold a family meeting to discuss expectations, set priorities and prioritize events to participate in (you may find you even have to say "no: to some things in order to "enjoy" the functions that are attended), schedule quiet time for each family member, make a shorter "to do" list, delegate responsibility, focus on what gets accomplished—not what doesn't, and finally, **give yourself permission** to change plans along the way to minimize negative stress.

? **Separation from Family** - Build a new support system by inviting others to celebrate with you, connect with loved ones far away by using creative alternatives, such as sending a video or cassette taped message, take advantage of celebrations or events in the community.

? **Loneliness/Depression** - Aggressively seek opportunities to get actively involved, volunteer to help others in need, talk with friends or professionals in times of distress, exercise regularly and stay physically fit.

? **Overspending** - Plan exactly what you can afford to spend on gifts during the holidays and then stay with that budget. Give children an allowance and have them buy gifts to give to their teachers and friends, choose names and set a monetary limit for gifts. When the gift-giving list becomes too large, ask others to bring items to your holiday gathers, and really assess whether or not an item is needed (if it's not indeed, do without it). Much space has been given to this article about holiday stress. Hopefully these tips will be read, understood, and applied thus leading to a happier, healthier holiday season for all station personnel. **HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE SAFETY STAFF**